

The Job Interview

Making Your Big Sales Pitch

It's time to make the big sales pitch to your customer, a prospective employer. How-by selling your qualities and abilities them. Here are some tips for a successful job interview.



PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Preparation is the first step toward a successful interview. Interviewers are continually amazed by the number of applicants who drift into their offices without any apparent preparation and only the vaguest idea of what they are going to say.



Preparing for an interview involves not only understanding the firm's business, but also learning ways to showcase your talents, even under the most challenging of circumstances. Sometimes that means providing a concise overview of your resume, while in other instances you may need to play a role in guiding the discussion. The key to a successful interview is knowing what makes you the best candidate for the



job and then conveying that information

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clearly and professionally. And recognize that interviewing is a two-way street: while the prospective employer is evaluating you, you should likewise be assessing the position, the hiring manager and the company.

Here are some tips to ensure a successful interview:

- Know the exact place and time of the interview, and the interviewer's full name, correct pronunciation, and title.
- Learn pertinent facts about the company such as annual sales revenue, principal lines of business and locations.
- Find out why the hiring manager is interested in your qualifications.
- Ask yourself how this job would impact your immediate and long-term career goals.
- An interview is a *two-way street*. Know what questions to ask during the interview. Your questions allow the interviewer to evaluate your professional and personal needs. Asking questions will help communicate your interest in the

position.

- Put your best foot forward. Always wear business attire and greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and an enthusiastic smile.

Be ready to ANSWER questions such as...

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your background, accomplishments.
- What are your strengths? Weaknesses?
- How would you describe your most recent job performance?
- What interests you about our company?
- How do you stay professionally current?
- What outside activities are most significant to your personal development?

Be ready to ASK questions such as...

- What would I be expected to accomplish in this position?
- What are some of the challenges I would face in this job?
- How do you think I fit the position?

Remember, a lack of questions may be

mistaken for a lack of interest. Not letting these kinds of subjects catch you off guard is a key factor in maintaining your composure during an interview. Rehearse these questions and answers in your mind (or even out loud) in the days before the interview.

NEGATIVE FACTORS EVALUATED BY AN INTERVIEWER

During the course of the interview, the interviewer will be assessing your negative as well as positive characteristics.

Listed below are negative factors that most often lead to rejection of a candidate.



- Personal appearance which is less than professional.
- Overbearing, overaggressive or egotistical behavior.
- No positive purpose.
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm — passive and indifferent attitude.
- Lack of confidence and poise, nervousness.
- Overemphasis on pay and benefits.
- Evasiveness, making excuses for unfavorable work history.
- Lack of tact, maturity

Continued The Job Interview Making Your Big Sales Pitch

and courtesy.

- Condemnation of past employers, managers, projects or technologies.
- Inability to maintain a conversation.
- Lack of commitment to fill the position at hand.
- Failure to ask questions about the position.
- Persistent attitude of "What can you do for me?"
- Lack of preparation for the interview—failure to get information about the company, resulting in an inability to ask intelligent questions.

company or maybe interview more candidates before making a decision.

If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show. Once in a while, an interviewer who is genuinely interested in you may seem to discourage you as a way of testing your reaction.

Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration. If you have answered the two questions "Why are you interested in this position?" and "What can you offer?" you have done all you can.



CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

If you are interested in the position, let the interviewer know. A good salesperson will say something like: "I'm very impressed with what I've seen today—your company, its products and the people I've met. I am confident I could do an excellent job in the position you've described to me."

Don't be too discouraged if no immediate commitment is made. The interviewer will probably have to talk to other people in the

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INTERVIEWING DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Do** plan to arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable.
- If presented with an application, **do** fill it out neatly and completely. **Don't** rely on the application or your resume to do the selling for you. Interviewers will want you to speak for yourself.
- **Do** greet the interviewer by last name if you are sure of the pronunciation. If not, ask him or her to repeat it. Look energetic as you walk.

Smile! Shake hands firmly. Be



genuinely glad to meet the interviewer.

- **Do** wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright, look alert and interested at all times.
- **Do** look a prospective employer in the eye while speaking. Be a good listener as well as a good communicator.
- **Do** follow the interviewer's leads, but try to get the interviewer to describe the position and duties to you early in the interview so that you can discuss how your background, skills and accomplishments fit the position.
- **Do** make sure that your good points come across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner.
- **Do** stress achievements—for example, sales records, processes developed, savings achieved, or systems installed.
- **Do** conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on opportunity.
- **Do** show enthusiasm. If you are interested in the opportunity, enthusiastic feedback can help your chances of being considered. If you are not interested, your responsiveness will still demonstrate your professionalism.
- **Don't** forget to bring a copy of your resume! Keep several copies in your briefcase if you are afraid you will forget.
- **Don't** smoke, even if the interviewer does and offers you one. **Do not** chew gum.
- **Don't** answer with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible. Describe those things about yourself that relate to the situation.
- **Don't** lie. Answer questions truthfully, frankly and succinctly.
- **Don't** make unnecessary negative remarks about your present or former employers. When giving reasons for leaving, limit your comments to those necessary to explain.
- **Don't** over-answer questions. And if the interviewer steers the conversation into politics or controversial issues, try to do more listening than speaking, since this could be a sensitive situation.
- **Don't** inquire about compensation, vacations, bonuses, retirement, or similar benefits in the initial interview. If asked what compensation you are seeking, indicate what you've earned but express your interest in opportunity rather than in a specific salary. ♦



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